

French and English Jesuits in Canada: Two Solitudes?

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In his 1945 novel *Two Solitudes*, the celebrated Canadian novelist Hugh MacLennan puts flesh on the complex relation between French Canada and English Canada. At times, these relations have been thorny and rife with misunderstandings, and fostering these relations has always required care and patience. Since then, there has been a repeated dance of distancing, dialogue, and convergence between the two groups. This essay will focus on how Canadian Jesuits, of both language groups, have engaged in this dance.

From the beginning of the Society of Jesus, its members came from many nations and spoke many languages. Yet Ignatius wanted union of minds and hearts for his followers, and so he asked them to avoid political controversy in their conversations and pronouncements.¹ Of course, men at home with different cultures, and who spoke multiple languages, were very precious in achieving the Jesuit apostolic mission of evangelization and in contributing to genuine peace and mutual understanding among peoples. This reality forms the religious backdrop for how Jesuits in Canada dealt with their political and linguistic challenges.

¹ "Let all avoid the disposition that leads to nations feeling or speaking negatively about other nations; rather let them . . . seek in the Lord to nurture a special affection for nations other than their own . . . and to avoid bringing wars and conflicts between nations into conversation, to the detriment of charity." See "Regulae Communes," no. 28, and "Summarium Constitutionum," no. 43, in *Thesaurus Spiritualis Societatis Jesu* (Rome: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1948), 430, 425; and *Constitutions*, no. 823 ; hereafter *Const.*; *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus and Their Complementary Norms: A Complete English Translation of the Official Latin Texts*, ed. John W. Padberg, SJ (St. Louis, MO: The Institute of Jesuit Sources [IJS], 1996), p. 406.

Multilingualism among Canadians, including speakers of native and European languages, has presented a major challenge to them. Notably, sharp conflicts have arisen in Canada between the two main language groups, French and English. The present study then concerns itself principally with Jesuit language policy in action: with how Jesuits in Canada have navigated the Francophone/Anglophone duality in striving to better fulfill the Jesuit mission they share. This journey—a complex one, involving Jesuit spirituality and its incarnation in the Society's ways of proceeding—seems eminently worth consideration today.

During the first period of the Jesuits in Canada (1611–1800), the members came overwhelmingly from France. And while some may have had some mastery of English, the main linguistic duality arose between French and the indigenous languages of those peoples among whom they served. After the British conquest (1756–1763), these Jesuits then had to deal with their overlords who, like the Empress Catherine of Russia, did not publish the 1776 papal bull that suppressed the Society, but in effect allowed it to carry on in Canada. The Society in Canada could not, however, welcome new members, and the last Canadian Jesuit of that era died in 1800. But when French Jesuits returned to Canada in 1842, relations between English and French languages soon arose as a concern. At times, strong differences of opinion emerged around this issue; but for Ignatius, antagonisms between nations should have no place in the international fraternity of the Society. We will thus begin this complex and fascinating history in 1842 and end it in 2018, the date of the unification of the English-Canadian and French-Canadian provinces of the Society.²

² Most of the information, including many sources cited in this essay, comes from the Archive of the Jesuits in Canada (AJC) and the Roman Archive of the Society of Jesus (ARSI). The ARSI documents digitized under the direction of Fr. Jacques Monet, SJ (1930–2024) constitute the Monet-ARSI collection held in the AJC, hereafter abbreviated AJC-M, each document cited with its corresponding internet address. Annual province catalogues have also proven useful, while interviews and personal memories have filled out the more recent narratives.

I. The New York–Canada Mission (1842–1879)

The superior of the Province of France who sent nine men to Canada in 1842 also served as superior of a mission in Kentucky. That mission transferred to New York in 1846, which led to the establishment of the New York-Canada mission headquartered in New York. Missionaries from France, and in later years Jesuits from this side of the Atlantic, whether Anglophone or Francophone, were expected to be fluent in both French and English, and they achieved this with varying levels of success. English fluency was indeed essential for ministry in New York but also for Montreal and the vast territory of the Canada mission. Until the 1860s, Montreal was more than half Anglophone, and it has continued as a major center for Anglophone Canadians, including Catholics, although Toronto now has eclipsed it.

From the start, Jesuits helped educate Anglophone Catholics, mostly Irish Catholics who in the 1830s and 1840s had fled the severe famine in their own country, and Anglophone Protestants constituted the upper class. Both Ignace Bourget (1799–1885), bishop of Montreal from 1840 to 1876, who invited the Jesuits to Canada, and the Jesuits themselves, saw the Anglo Protestants as an enemy who beckoned the French population into linguistic assimilation, thus weakening its Catholic faith and traditions. The archbishop wanted the Jesuits to function primarily in education, especially to promote the French-Canadian population, and the French language played an essential role in this mission as carried out primarily through the Collège Sainte-Marie de Montreal (1848–1969). In their minds, the Catholic leadership could not permit the recently-founded McGill University to function as the defining cultural and professional influence within Montreal. In fact, the higher clergy felt that too many French-Canadian professionals received their training there, and so the clergy feared lukewarmness, mixed marriages, and apostasy to result. And so, in addition to education, these Jesuits used general lectures, spiritual care, and quality preaching, to develop a French speaking elite ready to defend both language and faith.

Then, in 1846, Jesuit authorities joined Canada and New York into one mission, with its superior living in New York. The Jesuits from France, soon augmented by local entrants, often transferred between Montreal, where they acted mostly at the Collège Sainte-Marie,

and New York, where they had various pastoral or educational engagements as at Fordham University and St. Francis Xavier Church.

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Very quickly, the mission opened a novitiate in Montreal for both Francophone and Anglophone candidates including young US citizens. Most of them would receive formation in philosophy and theology, initially in New York, and later at Woodstock in Maryland.

But as today, superiors sent a considerable number of scholastics overseas to broaden their horizons and to acquire further competencies required for work in formation and in higher education.

In general, superiors considered newly trained Francophone Jesuits from Canada as those most valuable for the New York mission. Though not US citizens, they adapted more easily to US ways than did their cousins from France, in part because they had fewer problems mastering English. In fact, until the separation of the New York and Canada sectors, many of these men spent their best years of ministry in the US, some of them becoming naturalized citizens.

From these early years onward, however, significant tensions began to emerge.³ For example, a strong perception existed in Canada that the French superiors of the New York-based mission favored New York over Montreal. Indeed, in 1860, New York had nearly ten times the population of Montreal and about three times the Catholic population, mostly of Irish origin. From the perspective of the Jesuit *Constitutions*, this preference seems quite understandable, since superiors saw New York as having greater potential for the apostolate.

³ Fr. Edouard Lecompte (1856-1929), the first Provincial of Canada, describes them in his history of nineteenth-century Jesuits in Canada, *Les jésuites du Canada au XIXe siècle*, vol. 1, 1842-1872, esp. p. 66. See also the opening article by Fr. Paul Desjardins (1895-1975), in the first volume of the *Lettres du Bas Canada*, summarizing the developments in the French Canada province from 1842 to 1946. His volumes on the history of the Collège Sainte-Marie, available in the AJC library, offer more detailed information. For further information see *Le collège Ste. Marie de Montreal*, vol. 2 (Montreal: Collège Sainte-Marie, 1945).

At the same time, many French Canadians felt anxious, largely due to the failure of the Lower Canada rebellion of 1837–1838 and the report of Lord Durham (1792–1840) that led to the provinces of Upper Canada and Lower Canada uniting in 1840—with his hope of gradual assimilation of French Canadians as peaceful subjects of the British monarch. As such, some of the early French Jesuit superiors of the mission felt uncertain that the French language would perdure in Canada, and this had a negative impact on the work of the Canada mission. For example, Fr. Remi-Joseph Tellier (1796–1866), part of the original group that came to Canada in 1842, wrote that “the anxious eye of an observer sees the great city of Montreal as a burning arena, where two jealous races are engaged in a stubborn and bitter struggle, and underneath them Catholicism and heresy.” Aware of the potential of the Oxford movement, he went on to predict that “the faltering [French] Canadian nation will soon weaken and expire, but Catholicism will bring about an alliance with England which will save everything. In any event this is the hope in which we seek solace.”⁴

Tellier became superior of the New York-Canada mission in 1859, and one of his successors, Fr. Jacques Perron (1818–1890), who served as mission superior from 1866 to 1869, shared the same views. For his part, Perron wanted to anglicize the Collège Sainte-Marie because, overall, North America was English speaking and he felt that ultimately the French language would die. For these reasons, he insisted, in his instructions to the rector of the Collège Sainte-Marie, Fr. Firmin Vignon (1818–1891), on anglicization. But while the latter did try to move in this direction, he clearly did not agree with Perron’s thinking, and strong negative reactions among Francophone Montrealers soon brought this attempt to an end.⁵ At this point, the issue of separating

⁴ A translation from Tellier’s letter published in *Lettres des nouvelles missions du Canada, tome I (1843–1849)*, 42, in the AJC library. Tellier’s prophecy in part came true, given that the Jesuit province of England took over the responsibility of the Canada mission in 1879. However, England put no obstacles to the Francophone leaders of the Canada mission working toward the survival and flourishing of their language.

⁵ Lecompte, *Histoire*, 1:316–17; 2:32–33. The Jesuits in Montreal sought to meet the needs of the Anglophone Catholic population. However, while the Collège Sainte-Marie saw its purpose as forming a French-Canadian elite, over twenty percent of its students were Anglophone, and the province eventually

the two missions began to emerge and, in 1866, Perron engaged in some consultations on this topic. Quickly, the question changed from whether to when and how this separation should take place. The process would continue to evolve under the next superior of the Canada New York mission, Fr. John Bapst (1815–1887), from multilingual Switzerland, who had just served as the founding president of Boston College, and whose background helped him better understand the situation of the Canadian sector of the mission.

II. Toward the Separation of New York and Canada

Francophone Jesuits in Canada generally perceived that the union with New York severely hindered the progress of the Canada mission. At heart lay the issue of manpower: the New York superiors refused opportunities for new ventures in Canada (e.g., St. Michael's College in Toronto: the ordinary had offered it to the Jesuits, but the Congregation of St. Basil finally established it in 1852). As described above, the New York foundations received the priority, and vocations that originated in Canada spent many years working in the New York mission.⁶

At the same time, the novitiate in Sault au Recollet, Montreal, was becoming more Americanized, with fewer vocations of French-Canadian origin, until, in 1876, the Canadian province established the novitiate for New York candidates at West Park, soon followed by a notable increase of candidates from French Canada at the Sault.⁷ At this point, Fr.

founded Loyola College for them. For more details, see the second volume of Desjardins' history of the Collège Sainte-Marie.

⁶ Lecompte relates an interesting example of the results of this policy. Henri Hudson was born in Rivière Ouelle in Quebec and entered the first novitiate class in Montreal in 1843. After his studies, taken in English, and his ordination, his superiors assigned him, except for one year, to work in New York, where he occupied significant leadership posts. He returned to Canada in 1880 to serve as superior of the Canadian mission, now separated from the New York mission. By that time, although his French had fallen into disuse, he could laugh at his mistakes. (Lecompte, *Histoire*, 2:37.)

⁷ Before the establishment of West Park, the catalogue averaged eleven Francophone novices out of thirty-five for the Sault novitiate from 1873 to 1876. Afterward, from 1877 to 1879, the average rose to twenty-five Francophone

Théophile Charaux (1830–1902), the mission superior after Bapst, asked Vignon for his opinion on the issue of separation. With some reluctance, Vignon responded in 1876, frankly and at length, favoring the separation of the two sectors, which happened in 1879.⁸

Here we find at work two different attitudes toward the French language. The men sent from France had the normal mindset of Jesuit missionaries sent all over the world in that they felt fully ready to take on a different culture and language to work effectively. Specifically, their French language stood as the diplomatic language par excellence and so did not need protection, and they treasured it in their relations with family and old Jesuit friends. But in their ministry in New York, they could for the most part let it fall into abeyance and simply speak English, some more fluently than others. Many other French Jesuits sent to Canada, however, began to share the concerns of French Canadians, who felt part of a beleaguered minority and intensified their combat to maintain their own language and culture. But as emerges in Vignon's memorandum, they also saw English Canada as a key part of their territory, sorely neglected aside from a few parishes in Ontario and the traditional missions of the pre-suppression Jesuits. And so, they accepted and trained Canadian English-speaking candidates, mostly of Irish origin, which further diluted the Francophone culture.

Finally, this difference of opinion among Jesuits regarding the future of French in North America involves not sharp and unmanageable divisions but tendencies and conflicts. As such, these dynamics did not

novices out of thirty-one. Often, young men in French Canada had received advice not to join the Jesuits, even in a novitiate located in French Canada, since they would end up working not in Canada but in the US. Beyond 1876, the remaining Anglophone novices at the Sault came from Canada.

⁸ AJC BO-136-2.22. Firmin Vignon and his earlier adversary, Jacques Perron, represent well the opinions on the future of the French language in Canada. For Vignon, the joining of New York and Canada proved deleterious to Canada. Too often, staffing decisions favored New York, and vast Anglophone areas in Upper Canada, such as Toronto or Kingston, lacked Jesuit personnel to develop new ministries. While Vignon did not deny the good work done in New York, he pointed out that French Canadian scholastics received their training mostly in New York and most stayed there. In fact, he saw the New York mission uniting to the Canada mission only to absorb it, with French Canadian scholastics becoming naturalized in the US.

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is province founded, came under the new province of Champagne. Its first provincial, Fr. Victor Mertian (1817–1867), when visiting his new mission, offered to take on the formation of Canadian scholastics free of charge—an offer which the mission superior in New York refused. Vignon, in his 1876 response, claimed that the formation of scholastics in the US “...would be a good way to get them [viz., French Canadian scholastics] to lose, along with their French language, their national spirit, and to Americanize them.”⁹

To deepen our understanding of the context for these concerns, note that the Canadian mission divided naturally between East (Quebec) and West (Ontario and beyond). This division, which emerged soon after the rebirth of the Canadian mission in 1842, solidified under the titles *Lower Canada*, so named for proximity to the mouth of the St. Lawrence River in the East, and *Upper Canada*, closer to the source of the river in the West, and in 1924 these became the names of the two Canadian provinces. Those assigned to the native sector in Upper Canada then mostly learned various native languages, as their predecessors had done in the seventeenth century.

A few of these men, extraordinary linguists, played a key role in developing and sharing their knowledge of these languages with newly arrived missionaries. Others of them came to Upper Canada to serve the mostly Anglophone population of places like Guelph, Ontario, and

⁹ AJC BO-136-2, 22. Vignon wrote reluctantly this scathing and lengthy letter about the impact of the union of Canada and New York into one mission. To summarize, he quoted the bishop of Montreal as saying: “a Canadian Jesuit is a Canadian lost for his own country” (p. 12).

Chatham, Ontario, and some Jesuits, from other European countries, came to Canada because the Society was suppressed in their own countries. From this latter group, their own native languages added to the mix and served to minister among with recent immigrants of their own nationalities—for example, German Catholics in the Kitchener-Waterloo area of Ontario. At the same time, all Jesuits priests of that time sought fluency in Latin, and many achieved it. Indeed, Latin served as the language for official correspondence and documents as well as of philosophy and theology, which helped to achieve some commonality among Jesuits regardless their language of origin.

III. Canada Separates from New York (1879) and Becomes a Province (1907)

As time went on, dividing the New York-Canada mission made more and more sense, and the question for discernment changed from whether to when. When would the Society in the eastern part of the post-Civil War US stabilize to the point that it could reorganize? Confederation, meaning the formation of one nation from independent provinces, had taken place in Canada in 1867, but did the mission have the strength to forego its links to New York and find itself without external support? In 1879, the superior general of the Society brought about that separation, which proved a crucial event in the evolution of the Jesuit presence in Canada. Now, the general entrusted the Canada mission to the supervision of the English province, and the New York mission joined an enlarged New York-Maryland province. By that time, the number of Jesuits from France had begun to decline, and increase came from local vocations, mostly Francophone but also Anglophone.¹⁰

In the first months of this new arrangement, which had come to the English province as a “thunderbolt,” Fr. Edward Purbrick (1830–1914), from the English province, visited the new province, and left

¹⁰ By 1880, in Canada alone, seventeen men from France lived in a province of some one hundred fifty men, while ten years earlier, twenty-two came from France out of one hundred twenty-three in residence.

a diary of his visit, as well as a detailed report on what he found in Canada, to help the English provincial, James Jones (1828–1893), now responsible for Canada.¹¹ Jones fell ill, and soon Purbrick himself, who knew the situation firsthand, replaced him. Purbrick envisioned a Canadian Jesuit province for all of Canada, from sea to sea, in the largest colony of the British Empire. But he truly respected the Francophone members of that mission and their ministry. In a letter to the first mission superior, Fr. Théophile Charaux (1830–1902), he stated that the mission constituted a vice-province.¹²

Fr. Henri Hudon (1823–1897), the first superior from Canada (1880–1887), soon replaced Charaux and indeed acted as a vice-provincial. While offering helpful support and direction, Purbrick let the mission function on its own, no longer having to struggle against the strong waves of Americanization coming from south of the border, and eventually settle in its own place within the emerging Canadian confederation.¹³ But, in spite of their own limited finances and accommodations, the English also helped to support the formation of the increasing number of Canadian scholastics who needed their own scholasticate, which Hudon opened in 1885, under the name Immaculée Conception, and which flourished until 1960. Also, in 1885, the mission took on the Collège de Saint-Boni-

¹¹ AJC Q-1 3124.14; 3124.25; 3124.3.

¹² Purbrick to Charaux, AJC Q-1 3124.3. Purbrick stated this quite vigorously, while the general, in a letter to Purbrick dated March 1, 1881, referred more precisely to the superior of the Canada mission as a *quasi* vice-provincial (ARSI Prov. Angl. III, 400, AJC-M: PROVANGL3/002.jpg). This reflected in the makeup of the then English province catalogue, where all the communities, including missions, initially appeared grouped together, ending with an alphabetical list of members. After a few years, the catalog treated the Canadian mission separately, giving it its own alphabetical list, and eventually, the Canadian mission catalogue was printed separately. Clearly, the authorities of the English province had no intention of keeping Canada as a mission.

¹³ Indeed, Fr. Lecompte himself, the first historian of the province, praised Purbrick as a friend rather than as an Englishman bent on keeping French Canada in its place. A convert from Anglicanism, Purbrick joined the Society and at the age of thirty-nine, and served as rector of Stonyhurst, the flagship school of the British province, for nine years, after which he served as provincial of the English province for eight years. Not long after that, he returned to North America to serve as provincial of the New York-Maryland province from 1897 to 1901.

face, founded in 1855, from the local diocese located in Manitoba, further developing missionary efforts in the region.

At the same time, Purbrick felt very strongly about Jesuit outreach in the Anglophone provinces of the new confederation and in his visitation had gone out of his way to explore such possibilities. While he saw Toronto as the central strategic city for this development, he felt the Canada mission had lost its chance back in 1852 when the mission superior in New York refused the invitation of the Bishop of Toronto to open a college there. And so, Purbrick visited the Maritimes, inspected St. Mary's College in Halifax, and deemed it unready to become a Jesuit institution. Also, while he played a key role in the mission taking over St. Dunstan's, on Prince Edward Island, that fragile venture would last only one year. In addition, he saw the West as mission territory of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate and so felt unready to make further moves there. Nonetheless, Hudon made a key move westward in 1885, and the new Anglophone vice-province, begun in 1924, chose Toronto as its headquarters. Then, in 1940, that vice-province took over St. Mary's College, which received university status in 1954, but which the Jesuits relinquished in 1970, and which subsequently became a public university.

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Notably, this time found Anglophone Jesuits in short supply; in fact, they constituted only about twenty percent of the overall membership of the mission. And although the Anglophone population had majority status in Ontario, and the West, Anglophone Jesuits in the 1880s made up only about twenty-five percent of those assigned to that area. In 1885, there were thirty-six Jesuits working in Ontario, twenty-seven of them working with native communities, mostly Ojibwe. The missionaries were overwhelmingly Francophone, mostly Canadian, but with a few vigorous veterans from France, all inspired to follow in the footsteps of the Canadian Martyrs and volunteers.¹⁴ For a while, the number

¹⁴ Here, we follow the Roman usage in referring to Saints Isaac Jogues, Jean

of men from France in the mission remained steady at between fifteen and twenty. Notably, these men helped with the formation of the increasing number of Francophone scholastics in Canada.

While conflicts between Francophone and Anglophone members of the mission had begun to emerge, these initially had less impact, likely because the Jesuits had their hands full with Elzéar-Alexandre Taschereau, Cardinal Archbishop of Quebec (1820–1898). Specifically, Taschereau tried first to derail their efforts toward civil incorporation and then, having lost that battle, prevent them from receiving the full value of the Jesuit estates, which the British had seized after the death of the last Jesuit in Canada, Fr. Jean-Jacques Casot (1728–1800). In so doing, the cardinal intended to enable his university, Université Laval, to maintain its primacy in the province of Quebec, and to control the Jesuit college in Montreal. To this, Hudon organized a vigorous response. Taschereau lost that battle too, as the Jesuit mission received, by decision of Pope Leo XIII, \$160,000.00 (CAD 6 million today), which amounted to more than what the cardinal received, and which considerably diminished the mission's debts while strengthening its educational apostolates.¹⁵ In all of this, the premier of Quebec, Honoré Mercier (1840–1894), proved a great help to the Jesuits.¹⁶

de Brébeuf, and their companions as the “Canadian Martyrs,” most often known in the US as the *North American Martyrs*.

¹⁵ Many legal thrusts and counter thrusts, going all the way to Pope Leo XIII and the Canadian parliament, punctuate this complex history. For a brief on-line account of this topic, go to the *Canadian Encyclopedia* and to the second volume of Fr. Lecompte's history (see n3, above) in the volumes of the *Lettres du Bas-Canada* for 1951 and 1952. His detailed account offers a good portrayal of the strong emotions that this battle aroused. Note that an agent of the government of Quebec in the 1880s estimated the Jesuit estates—mostly lands the revenue from which financed the apostolates of the Society in the eighteenth century—as worth some \$1.6 million, today roughly CAD 60 million. The Quebec government distributed \$400,000 of this because politically it could not push further with the Legislative Assembly.

¹⁶ A student at the Collège Sainte-Marie from 1854, Honoré Mercier is one of its most important alumni. Bishop Bourget initially intended the Jesuits to educate French Canadians to defend their language and their faith, and Mercier provided an outstanding example of success for this policy. He became a lawyer, entered Quebec politics, and ended up serving as premier of the province, in which position he protected the Jesuits who had educated him.

The Canada mission continued thriving under British supervision, but soon enough the question arose as to whether the mission was ready for independence, which would mean, as Purbrick wished, reporting directly to Fr. General rather than to the English provincial. Fr. General, in 1886, chose Fr. John Baptist Lessmann (1825–1899), a German serving as superior of the Buffalo mission, as visitor to help settle this question. Here, in addition to the normal task of reviewing religious observance, and making local changes, the general asked him to look at the status of the mission, and he proved very helpful to the Canadian Jesuits in dealing with their formidable opponent, Mgr. Taschereau.¹⁷ As a result of Lessmann's recommendation, the supervision of the mission by the English province stopped, and in 1887 Fr. Pierre Hamel (1832–1905) took on the office of mission superior. During Hamel's tenure and those of his three successors, Frs. F. X. Renaud (1843–1920), Télésphore Filiatrault (1852–1930), and Édouard Lecompte (1856–1929), who in 1907 became the first provincial superior of Canada, rapid expansion took place along with significant changes that intimated the later division into the provinces of Upper and Lower Canada.

IV. Toward Separation into Two Canadian Provinces

The first challenge for the Canada mission involved addressing the approach of some of its French superiors in New York, who did not feel convinced that the French language would perdure in Canada. As indicated above, their approach did not hold sway. However, language politics, and differing views of apostolic deployment, triggered a conflict between mostly native Anglophone and Francophone Jesuits regarding use of the French language in the Canadian mission. Yet even though Jesuits felt tempted to take sides, the Jesuit rule called for neutrality in the face of political conflicts, and for a universal love of all regardless of language or nationality.¹⁸ This developed into a real

¹⁷ AJC P-98 3-IV-35, 36.

¹⁸ Each Jesuit of that period had a booklet that included a summary of the *Constitutions* along with the *Common Rules* (see n1, above). The old Jesuit tradition held that when a conversation between Jesuits threatened to get acrimonious, the interlocutors should at once begin to speak of good Pope Marcellus, who died after a twenty-two-day reign, shortly before the death of Ignatius.

issue for Jesuit superiors in both Rome and Canada, and the resolution of the issue led to the division into two provinces, one for Francophone Jesuits and the other for Anglophone Jesuits.

In this process, we can single out three steps, the first two of which prepared the way for the third. In chronological order, the first step involved the creation of Loyola College (1896); the second, the creation of a new novitiate in Guelph, Ontario, to form Anglophone novices (1913); and the third, the division of the one Canadian province into two (1924), one for English, or Upper Canada (a vice-province until 1939), and one for French, or Lower Canada.

A. A New Anglophone College

Let us begin with the separation in 1896 of Loyola College (1896–1974) from the Collège Sainte-Marie. The instruction of English students at the Collège Sainte-Marie—in early years also known as St. Mary’s College—had fallen subject to acrimonious debate. While the Jesuits of the Collège Sainte-Marie felt prepared to accept and provide for Anglophone students who otherwise might end up in a White Anglo-Saxon Protestant institution such as McGill, they always saw education in French, especially in the classical course, as their most important objective. As such, they took Anglophone students into certain classes of the Francophone classical course while at the same time starting a new stream of commercial studies for them. This program came to an end in 1888 and they instituted a classical program for Anglophone students, hereby putting added stress on the teaching resources of the college.

Based on the emerging lack of space at the Collège Sainte-Marie, the mission made a simple and straightforward decision to split instruction in English to a new college given the name *Loyola* after the founder of the Society. Originally situated close to the Collège Sainte-Marie, Loyola College, which briefly occupied other premises in downtown Montreal, in the 1910s took the bold move to build in the farming area to the west of then Montreal. The Collège Sainte-Marie and Loyola thus existed as sister colleges, and even after the separation of the provinces in 1924, superiors often sent young Jesuits to the college of the other language to teach, since bilingualism persisted as an objective of both

provinces. From 1916 onward, Loyola College, soon situated within the expanding borders of Montreal, began to thrive, even though superiors initially had difficulty finding Jesuit professors and administrators to staff the institution.¹⁹ Notably, both colleges for many decades produced many Jesuit vocations, which proved especially important for the development of the English sector of the province.

B. A New Anglophone Novitiate

The next significant move involved the establishment, in 1913, of an Anglophone novitiate in Guelph, Ontario, a city in which Jesuits had worked since 1852. Up until then, they had one novitiate, Sault au Recollet, then north of the boundaries of Montreal. When, in 1876, American novices migrated from the Sault to West Park, New York, the number of Canadian novices, mostly Francophone, increased quickly as intended. But the number of Anglophone candidates dropped at Sault au Recollet, since potential Anglophone candidates saw it as a primarily Francophone institution.

And so, to encourage the growth of its Anglophone side, the province started, in 1913, an Anglophone novitiate in Guelph.²⁰ The novice director at the Sault, Fr. Henri Bourque (1868-1943), migrated to this new house with the Anglophone novices, and over the next decades a more significant number of Anglophone novices entered and took vows. While this number did not match the number of novices in the Francophone sector of the province, enough eventually entered to mark significant growth in English Canada—a growth that would lead to separation in 1924.²¹

¹⁹ On this history, see Joseph Gavin, *Teachers of a Nation: Jesuits in English Canada, 1832–2013*, vol. 1 (Toronto: Novalis, 2015).

²⁰ The minutes of province consultations between 1910 and 1913 mention this topic (AJC P-98 UR 36). While the minutes of March 20, 1910 note that Fr. General asked that Canada spare nothing to attract English candidates, the Canadian provincial already shared this concern, since he saw this novitiate as an essential move to develop more fully the Anglophone side of the province.

²¹ The foundation of this novitiate achieved its purpose, as in its first six years the number of Anglophone novices increased from an average of about six per year to fifteen per year, with notable increases beyond that.

C. The New English Vice-Province: Context

Events in the first decades of the 1900s, concerns among French Canadians, including Jesuits, raised for the survival of their language within Canada. These events in turn raised the concerns of English-Canadian Jesuits, who felt that the predominantly French-Canadian leaders of the Jesuits in Canada were neglecting their needs and apostolic development.²² The desire of the Catholic Anglophone population across Canada for Jesuit schools propelled these concerns, since the province administration did not see itself able to provide such. In what follows, I will treat linguistic and apostolic concerns separately.

1. Linguistic Considerations

From roughly 1900 to 1920, the language preoccupations of Francophone Jesuits developed markedly. To begin, many French Canadians had come to think that, in the new Canadian Confederation (1867), they did not have an equal opportunity to flourish throughout the whole country. Instead, they sensed an underlying assimilationist project to keep them in their original territory. To put this another way, they heard,

²² Judging by surnames, most of the Anglophone Jesuits had Irish ancestry. In 1908, provincial Edouard Lecompte, when the general asked him about these conflicts, sought information from local superiors. While most considered them of minimal importance, one of them referred to two Anglophone Jesuits whose complaints created considerable upset within the community. One of them went so far as to voice his complaints about his Francophones brothers to his Anglophone students in St. Boniface, Manitoba. A 1918 letter from a professor at the Immaculée to his local superior claimed that the conflicts were widespread and significant, especially among some scholastics who, never having had to deal with difficult administrative realities, glossed over the complexities of the situation, came up with simplistic solutions, and proclaimed them vociferously.

While some Anglophone Jesuits functioned well within a predominantly Francophone context, others, relatively young, felt underemployed and isolated and thus wanted to transfer to a US province. In short, for them to function in French communities restrained their efforts to evangelize the large English population of Montreal, and the alternative of what to them were the backwoods of Ontario did not appeal to them. Major superiors, who often sympathized with them, tried to resolve the problems locally but held back due to resistance from influential Francophone Jesuits in their local apostolates. And it goes without saying that in this conflictual context the attitude of these Anglophones would readily appear as a lack of *disponibilité*.

"Yes, by all means!" to French speaking settlers in the rest of Canada, but, "No!" to their French language; more crudely, they heard many Anglophones saying to them, "Speak white!"²³

Several other factors came into play, including, outside Quebec, dilution of the Francophone presence through wholesale immigration from Europe and a decreasing minority of Francophones; and, notably in Ontario and Manitoba, legislation severely restricting education in French. All this convinced Francophone Jesuits that the assimilationist vision of Lord Durham, expressed in his 1839 report, still loomed large. That, along with the hanging in 1885 of the French speaking leader of the Métis, Louis Riel (1844–1885), and the 1917 conscription crisis, in which French Canadians resisted having to enlist in a war to aid the British empire, left French Canadians, including Jesuits, feeling threatened and more assertive in defending their identity and their language.

*They heard, "Yes, by all means!"
to French speaking settlers in the
rest of Canada, but, "No!" to their
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saying to them, "Speak white!"*

Even more significant for Francophone Jesuits, Anglo Catholics seemed increasingly to join Anglo Protestants in an unwelcome attack against the French language. At the Eucharistic Congress of 1910, for example, Archbishop Francis Bourne (1861–1935), primate of England, in an ill-vetted address at Notre Dame Church in Montreal, presented a vision wherein the English language would predominate over the whole of Canada and all immigrants would adopt it. In this perspective, English would function as a powerful vehicle to bring the entire English-speaking world back to its ancient Catholic roots. Francophone Catholics, whose language then

²³ "The first known instance of derogatory use of the phrase 'speak white' against French-speaking Canadians occurred on October 12, 1889 at the Canadian House of Commons, when . . . Henri Bourassa (1868-1952) was booed by English-speaking fellow members of the parliament and shouted at to 'Speak White!' while speaking French during debates on Canada's engagement in the Second Boer War." See Éliane Catela Bordes et al., *Le Mémorial du Québec, t. IV: 1890–1917* (Montréal: La Société des éditions du Mémorial [Quebec], 1981), 89

could only dwindle in importance, perceived this address as in invitation to join this movement.²⁴

Henri Bourassa (1868–1952), a member of the Quebec legislative assembly, and founding editor of *Le Devoir*, expressed the immediate and visceral French-Canadian reaction. Speaking later at the event, he modified his prepared address to respond to Mgr. Bourne.²⁵ It was an oratorical triumph. Yes, he said, French Canadians held a minority in Canada; but their language still functioned as the privileged vehicle to carry the faith for them, for which reason it should be allowed to flourish everywhere in Canada. However, this should not happen to the disregard of the faith of English and Irish Catholics. In a conversation with Bourassa later, Bourne acknowledged that, while it would be a loss for the French language to die in Canada, it would be an even greater loss for the English-speaking population of Canada not to receive the faith in its own language.

Note that this discussion had more than theoretical implications for Francophone Catholics of that period. They felt threatened precisely because an Irish Canadian bishop in Ontario, Michael Francis Fallon (1867–1931), led Anglophone Catholics in supporting the 1917 regulation of the Ontario government that severely limited French language education in that province.²⁶ For Francophone Catholics, such a quarrel with mostly Protestant English-Canadians came as no surprise. However, Francophone Jesuits felt that Irish Catholics in Quebec should have remembered the struggles in their home country for the survival of their own language and thus take the side of the French Catholics rather than that of the English Protestants.

²⁴ Already, in 1844, Remi Tellier, one of the first Jesuits to return to Canada, endorsed this movement (see n4, above).

²⁵ The text of this speech appears in Fr. Paul Racine, SJ, *Henri Bourassa à Notre Dame* (Montréal: Éditions de l'Entraide Paroisse Immaculée-Conception, 1941), <http://faculty.marianopolis.edu/c.belanger/QuebecHistory/docs/1910>. Racine presents the allocation as a rhetorical model.

²⁶ See Pasquale Fiorino, "Fallon, Michael Francis," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, https://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/fallon_michael_francis_16E.html.

As a result, French Canadians felt beleaguered and defended themselves vigorously. This led them to support even more strongly a political agenda that sought to protect an entitled space for their language and religion not only in Quebec but also in Canada as a whole. This movement attracted Francophone Jesuits in Canada, some of whom took public stands to defend their language and their culture, at times publishing written materials on this issue, even using pseudonyms and fostering an association of younger French-Canadians to advocate for the cause. All the while, these Jesuits professed that their underlying concern had to do not with politics but with safeguarding the Catholic faith of French Canada by preserving its language.

Nevertheless, this upset several of their Anglophone colleagues, who thought that the French Canadians had gone too far and who felt attacked by this aggressive advocacy of a cause to which the Anglophones felt somewhat indifferent. This situation, in turn, created among Jesuits in Canada conflict and disunity, which reached the ears of the Roman authorities, who responded quickly. Already in 1905, Superior General Franz Xavier Wernz (1842–1914) had expressed his disapproval of Jesuits taking political stances, and he asked the provincial in 1911 to investigate the situation in Canada and to bring any conflicts to an end. Furthermore, these negative reports resulted in exhortations to the Jesuits in Canada to avoid the nationalism that the Society had always decried and not to take sides on political issues.²⁷

In discussing these issues in Rome, officials used the generic term *nationalism*. Ignatius himself had envisioned the Society as a cohesive body united in mind and heart, in which men of different nationalities would work side by side despite any political animosities among their nations of origin. In fact, the process of Jesuit formation has always sought

²⁷ At the time of Ignatius, the terms *nation* and *nationalism* referred to territories and to the princes who controlled and defended them. Jesuits might come from different nations, but they had to love all nations equally. This conflict between French and English Jesuits in Canada brought to light another dimension to nationhood based on the kinship of a common origin, a common culture, a common language, and a common religion. And from Fr. General Pedro Arrupe (1936–2020) onward, the basic injunction of the *Constitutions* regarding universal love for all nationalities took a different turn in that the demands of social justice often required Jesuits to take clear and public positions in a variety of conflicts both within and between nations.

to help young members resolve these animosities among themselves. Of course, as for all religious, Jesuits struggle for a perfection they have not yet attained. Furthermore, conflicts among different nationalities within the Society over the centuries have had an adverse impact on Jesuits and their common mission. For this reason, Jesuits have had to learn the need to safeguard and promote peace in their relations with each other and circumspection in their speech. Normally, men with these skills in abundance would rise to positions of leadership where, as a rule, inter-province relations went well. At least in the Canadian context, however, the negative attitudes of some in the lower ranks, including those in formation, required reprimand and often left superiors feeling frustrated in their efforts toward reconciliation.

Finally, general superiors Franz Xavier Wernz (1842–1914) and Włodimir Ledochowski (1866–1942) insisted that province leadership had to correct the tendency toward nationalism in the Canadian province. In the Canadian context, this meant promoting bilingualism and requiring the study of the “other” language in both novitiates and in later formation to enhance flexibility, unity, and apostolic effectiveness. And as we know now, this means both linguistic facility and cultural familiarity. Unfortunately, the Society did not formulate the latter requisite clearly until later years.

2. Apostolic Considerations

In the first quarter of the 1900s, another practical concern amplified the linguistic conflicts: Anglophone Jesuits bemoaned the fact that their superiors missioned relatively few of them, especially those working in education, to the English side of the province. These Jesuits insisted on making their views widely known, especially to their Canadian and Roman superiors. Generals in Rome, above all Wernz and Ledochowski, took them seriously. Canadian provincials in turn received frequent exhortations from Rome reminding them that they had to develop the Jesuit mission everywhere in Canada and establish Anglophone Jesuit schools, even as they felt ready, in 1913, to establish a Francophone college in Edmonton.

Given the small number of Canadian Jesuits fully at home with English, and the small number of men of leadership quality ready for

assignment, Jesuit superiors in Montreal judged premature, even if eminently desirable, the establishment of new Anglophone schools. This attitude contrasted with the Jesuit approach of taking prudent apostolic risks hoping that resources would appear as new enterprises developed. And at the same time, further complications arose because some bishops in English Canada did not want to deal with the Jesuits if they had Francophone superiors. Nevertheless, in 1917, provincial Joseph Carrière made a firm decision, prompted by the general, to take the first steps toward establishing an Anglophone school in Regina, even absent the ideal conditions he would have desired.

Here, the complaint against the Francophone leaders of the province arises as to why they seemed so assertive in defending their language and yet so reticent to expand the province into Anglophone Canada. These leaders defended themselves vigorously by arguing that they felt it more important to set a solid base for the Anglophone mission of the province by cultivating and developing Anglophone vocations, as they did through Loyola College and the Guelph novitiate. Yet many Jesuits interpreted as hostility their aversion to risk. And so, as time went on, it appeared more and more clear that some sort of division of the province would help both groups in their respective apostolic development.

D. The New English-Canadian Vice-Province: Realization

Coming to a decision would take some time for which Ledochowski felt that the Canadian province required outside help. To this end, in 1917, the general chose as visitor to the Canadian province, Irish-born Fr. William Power (1855–1934), initially formed as a Jesuit in France, and belonging to the New Orleans Province, where he had served as a superior when it existed as a mission. Ledochowski mandated him to get to the bottom of the conflict, which he presented briefly, but clearly, in his mandate, and to deal with the usual issues of formation, finances, and administration. Here, of course, the highest decisions remained with the general, informed by the visitor, and these included the most important

questions of whether and when to make a division of the province and whom to appoint as major superior.²⁸

Power came in April 1917, and by mid-1918, he finished his task, which would have tested a veteran diplomat to the full. Francophone Jesuits felt somewhat apprehensive that in their conflict with their Irish confreres, Power, being himself Irish, would favor the latter. Still, they hoped that his visit would bear fruit.

As for his character, Power had a reputation as an accomplished orator, who made his points forcefully and clearly, but lacked diplomatic skill. Many felt at times that he exacerbated the conflict rather than pacifying it. On this point, the Francophone leaders of the province unanimously reported that he had failed to meet with them individually and really hear them out, although he carefully noted and remembered what the Anglophone Jesuits, mostly of Irish background, had told him. Nonetheless, they reached a peaceful resolution in the end, apparently due to the Francophone leaders' vow of obedience, at least of the will if not of the intellect.

The intra-provincial conflict came to a high point of intensity in a meeting with the visitor, the provincial, and his consultants, in May 1918. Power rehearsed in detail and with emphasis on the complaints that the Irish Canadian Jesuits were leveling against the French-Canadian Jesuits. In essence, the Irish found excessive the vigorous defense of the French language that the Francophone Jesuits—along with many other Quebec leaders—were mounting in the face of those who sought to restrict their language to Quebec. But the main brunt of their complaints focused on the fact that the provincials of Canada, although supposedly having a national purview, neglected the interests of the English-speaking population.

Specifically, the members of the consultation felt that Power agreed with what he heard from these Anglophone members of the province. To the general, Power claimed that he was simply relating these complaints and not making them his own. Still, he did not make this clear

²⁸ The main source for visitation documents appears in AJC, *Actes des Visiteurs*, P-98 UR 27 3-IV-37, 38; and ARSI, Can 6-III (AJC-M,;CANADA1006/ 0374.jpg ff).

to the consultors, telling them with much energy that they needed to do something about these complaints if they wanted them to stop. These consultors perceived this recital of complaints as an attack, and so met and decided to write extensive letters of rebuttal, with copies to both Power himself and to the general.²⁹ Their two main points:

- To the accusation that French Canadian Jesuits had set themselves aggressively against the English language, they claimed that Francophone Jesuits had never attacked the English language. Indeed, especially in cities, they readily provided services in it.³⁰ But they did defend their own language under threat of assimilation and would continue to do so.
- To the complaint that the leadership of the Society neglected the Anglophone sector of the province, establishing very few new foundations, they claimed that Anglophones in the province existed as a minority, and an insufficient number of Francophone Jesuits knew English well enough to teach English to Anglophone students. However, a good number of Francophones had competence for pastoral ministry and made a strong contribution in the Ontario parish sector. Moreover, the staff of the native missions consisted primarily of Francophones. Lists with details served as evidence that Jesuit leadership was not neglecting the English sector.

While the consultors feared that these letters would not convince Power, they recognized that the general would take their opinions into consideration as he made his final decisions. At the conclusion of his visit, Power sent, with the general's approbation, a letter known as a *memoriale*, giving his conclusions and recommendations to the province.³¹ In this letter, Power reiterated a warning of the general against

²⁹ Among these replies to Power, we might note that of Lecompte (also Q-1 3221-1) and a joint one that the provincial and most consultors signed (3221-8).

³⁰ Over time, this readiness of French-Canadian Jesuits to embrace the English language for pastoral purposes appeared more clearly. In the 1940s, the general entrusted to them a mission in Ethiopia, where the population used English as the Western European language. And not only did they function in that language, but in later years, Francophones also played a key role in the formation of the East African province, with one of theirs, Fr. Louis Plamondon becoming its first provincial.

³¹ This memorial appears in AJC R-0011 6,9.

Jesuit agitation in political issues, even if other religious and priests could have some flexibility in such matters. For instance, in a letter to the pope, Cardinal Bégin and the bishops from Quebec used the argument of “language as the bulwark of faith” when vigorously objecting to the Irish bishops in Ontario. The latter sought both to minimize education in French within that province and to reduce the number of French-Canadian bishops needed for its Francophone population.³² But while these secular clergy could argue this way and publicize their position, the Jesuits felt an obligation of silence and impartiality that prevented them from doing the same.

In fact, Power did not address explicitly the issue of publicly defending one’s language as a bulwark of faith. In any event, Power had told the general that he did not find the bulwark of faith argument convincing and argued instead for the importance of proper formation and education rather than a common language to protect the faith.³³ Here, he urged charity in relations among Jesuits of different origins and languages and energy in developing the apostolic potential in the whole of Canada, but in light of available resources. Still, Power’s memorial does show a greater appreciation of the complexities of the situation that he came to assess.

Related to this case, one of Power’s main tasks involved advising the general on a new provincial to take over in 1918—one who would bring peace and prepare for a future division of the province. However, the general returned the first terna, or list of three names that the province had submitted to him for consideration. While the first person named had strong experience and readiness to take the position, the general saw him as too deeply involved on the Francophone side of the language conflict. Then, he saw the second as too old and the third of uncertain health. In short, the general wanted a younger man, rather than someone selected from a restricted circle of leadership within

³² Their letter appears in ARSI Can 6 III 27 (AJC-M: CANADA1006/0559.jpg ff).

³³ For a time, the policy of establishing language as a bulwark of faith produced good results; however, the sharp decline of religious practice in Quebec since the 1960s came not through the abandonment of the French language but in great part through French-speaking anti-religious, anti-clerical, movements in harmony with the ideals of the French Revolution.

the province, however, finding that younger man, took some deliberation. Specifically, province leadership feared that the two candidates who emerged would not have the requisite experience for the job. One of them, the forty-year-old Franco-Irish John Milway Filion (1878–1962), or Fr. Jean, had just returned from his tertianship in England.³⁴ Shortly after taking the position of minister at Loyola College, he stepped into the role of acting rector, which he carried out to great satisfaction. For Power, and the general, he eventually stood out as the best choice—not only because of his competence but also because of his bilinguality and Franco-Irish ancestry—and the general named him provincial by as of June 27, 1918.³⁵

Most of those involved with the question thought that the division of the Canada province would remove a source of conflict and would favor apostolic development in both the Anglophone and Francophone sectors.

By then, most of those involved with the question thought that the division of the Canada province would remove a source of conflict and would favor apostolic development in both the Anglophone and Francophone sectors. The burning question now had to do with how and when to divide the province. Power and Filion personally felt this division, though justified, premature in 1918. For one thing, a properly functioning province requires enough priests

³⁴ During his years in the Canadian province, people often knew him as Jean Filion. A Jesuit classmate, Fr. Adélaré Dugré, (1881–1970) referred to him in his memoirs as “John-Milway Filion.” Later, as provincial of Upper (English) Canada, people knew him as *John Milway Filion*. Though fully bilingual, Filion came from an Irish village, and people saw him as more Irish than French. Dugré, who became a French Canada provincial and later the English assistant in Rome, worried about defending the French language and relates that he and Francophone Jesuits at the time saw the choice of an Irishman as visitor and Filion’s appointment as provincial of Canada as an indication that the general and the visitor favored the Irish rather than the French side. See his *Souvenirs et réflexions* (Montréal: Maison Provinciale, 1971), 68–69.

³⁵ If one considers his voluminous correspondence on these matters, Fr. General Ledochowski indeed spent much time and energy on these Canadian Jesuit conflicts, hoping for reconciliation and a good way forward for the Jesuit enterprise in Canada. In the end, Ledochowski appreciated Power’s contribution, subsequently naming him visitor to the Belgian and Irish provinces.

in final vows who have leadership skills. About one hundred five members of the Canadian province—a relatively small number with

Filion, having served as provincial of Canada for six years, would serve as provincial of Upper Canada for four years and thus ensure continuity between the old and the new.

an even smaller number of fully formed and experienced Jesuits—would migrate to the new entity. Would the general then make it a region under a province other than French Canada, or would he wait for numbers to grow to the point that he could create a province? In addition, vexing issues of

how to divide territory and the financial assets emerged. In short, the complex and necessary negotiations took time.

Finally, in 1924, the general decided to create the vice-province of Upper Canada, which, together with the province of Lower Canada, would share the Canadian territory.³⁶ Filion exercised prudence in his governance of the Province of Canada from 1918 to 1924, attenuating the French-English conflicts in the province and dealing with the delicate issues surrounding impending division. And while a few of the earlier conflicts flared up, he kept to the line that general Ledochowski had drawn, and peace returned, at least outwardly. Of course, the most logical division would have taken place according to linguistic considerations, with each province entitled to open a house or an apostolate, according to need, anywhere in Canada. Yet Roman rule mandated that provinces have distinct territories—a consideration that did not make sense in the Canadian context because of how the population spread within the country. And so, the chosen solution derived primarily from

³⁶To help contextualize this division, compare it to the similar division in 1935 of the Belgian province, at the time the largest province in the Society, with 1,637 members, into two provinces, the North Belgian (Flemish) and South Belgian (French-speaking) provinces. Next in size came the New York-Maryland province, with 1,304 members, which divided in 1943. Such factors as province numbers, size of territory, and differences of language or political jurisdiction may lead to the division of a province. Province numbers played a role in Belgium but not in Canada, with only 551 men, while size of territory likely mattered in Canada but not in Belgium. Language differences played a role in both.

the system of rail lines, with Lower Canada located usually to the north of certain of them and Upper Canada to the south.³⁷

V. Two Provinces Side by Side: Growth (1924–1964)

The Francophone Province of Lower Canada existed mostly in Quebec but also in other areas with a significant Francophone population, while the Vice-Province of Upper Canada had houses across Canada. In its first year, Lower Canada had four hundred twenty-eight members residing in its territory plus twenty-six, mostly scholastics, from Upper Canada, while Upper Canada had one hundred thirty-seven members plus thirty-seven, mostly working in the native sector, applied from Lower Canada. Having thirty-nine priests and eighty scholastics in the vice-province meant scarcity of formed members for the province apostolates of that period but also much promise for the future. Filion, having served as provincial of Canada for six years, would serve as provincial of Upper Canada for four years and thus ensure continuity between the old and the new, just as Bourque had done with the Guelph novitiate in 1913. God had blessed both provinces with a growing number of active priests, smaller numbers of retired and elderly priests, and large numbers of entries. And while not all the new men stayed with the Jesuits, enough did to bring renewal and growth to their provinces' apostolic bodies.

In brief, this division brought greater peace. Traditional irritants disappeared and the major problems of managing a difficult union no longer weighed heavily on both sides. Furthermore, the division released energy for distinct apostolic pursuits. On this note, members of each province went their own ways, living in their own spaces. Initially, many members of both provinces knew each other from before the separation, but with new members joining, this antecedent familiarity dwindled, and the provinces moved toward, in Canadian style, "two solitudes," even though each province tacitly valued their common origins and shared commitment to Jesuit

³⁷ In 2007, Fr. General Peter-Hans Kolvenbach (1928–2016) agreed to allow either province to set up houses anywhere in Canada without territorial restrictions, only eleven years before the rejoining of the provinces.

values. As neighbors, they still interacted in practical matters that needed immediate attention and, little by little, in more weighty matters, to the point that, some ninety years later, they had opened themselves to the possibility of uniting again as one province.

The new province chose Toronto for its headquarters, as envisioned by Purbrick some forty years before, and slowly, but surely, began a process of expansion into its vast territory. A careful administrator, Filion set good foundations for the new province. He prioritized establishing a sanctuary, which opened two years after the beginning of his term, for the Canadian Martyrs, whom Rome had canonized in 1930, and that sanctuary has played a key role in unifying the Canadian Jesuits. Fr. William Hingston (1877–1964), who succeeded him, moved quickly to expand the province's foundations, establishing a new philosophate in Toronto, a school in Kingston, Ontario, and a high school and college in Winnipeg, Manitoba. While these initiatives endowed the province with key institutions, they also left it with major financial problems that the next provincial, Fr. Henry Keane (1876–1956), who had served as provincial in England, played a key role in resolving.³⁸ The provincials who followed him managed human and financial resources well and, by the 1960s, the new province found itself ready to undertake larger projects.

During this time, the Francophone province continued to evolve peacefully, but it would face challenges starting in the early 1960s. Meanwhile, although good collaboration and communication took place between the respective superiors, a key issue in the Anglophone vice-province involved formation resources. The French Canada province already had a novitiate, and soon organized a juniorate, but lacked a philosophate and a theologate. And while the general wanted them to provide formation free of charge to English-Canadian scholastics for ten years, which it generously did to the best of its ability at the Immaculée Conception, he also pushed the new vice-province to expand its formation.³⁹ This it did

³⁸ The choice of an Englishman as third provincial witnessed that the new province did not yet have men of sufficient leadership potential.

³⁹ The second and third volumes of the *Dictionary of Jesuit Biography* (Toronto:

by founding Regis College—at that time named College of Christ the King—in Toronto, which offered philosophy studies from 1930 to 1961 and theology studies from 1943 to this day.

Meanwhile, the French Canadian scholasticate continued to welcome English-Canadian scholastics, several of whom took advantage of the opportunity to make good friends with French Canadian scholastics and, in so doing, became solidly bilingual. And while occasional tensions developed between the two provinces, this enhancement of inter-provincial bonds later made the path of eventual reunion easier.⁴⁰

By 1940, there existed twenty-nine English-Canadians, almost all in theology, out of one hundred forty-six scholastics, and with its two hundred nineteen members, including brothers and priests, the building had reached capacity. At this time, the Immaculée secured extra housing to accommodate men from the sister province, but numbers continued to increase, which led to fewer available rooms. Fortunately, Regis College began in 1943 to offer a theology program, which helped to alleviate the pressure. Meanwhile, the number of English-Canadians at the Immaculée Conception diminished, and the provincial of French Canada later sent a few of his men to English Canada for theology studies.

Canadian Institute of Jesuit Studies, 2006–2018) of men who worked in ministry to English Canada provide interesting data on this. For the period when the new vice-province had no theologate (from 1924 to 1943), catalogues tell us that for their theology, most men (some sixty-five percent, or eighty-six men) went to the Immaculée Conception, while others went to the US (eleven percent) or to Europe (e.g., Milltown Park, Heythrop, or the Gregorian [twelve percent]), while some moved into the new Regis theologate when it opened. Note that these statistics cover only the men who died in the Society: as a matter of fact, the French Canada province trained more than eighty-six Anglophones over these years.

⁴⁰When the issue of reunion came up early in the twenty-first century, less initial resistance came from the older membership of both provinces, closer to the earlier Canada-wide province. The same held true of many recent entries, the issue of separation of Quebec from Canada looming less large on their horizon.

VI. The 1960s and Decline in Jesuit Membership

During the 1960s, two major events took place that involved significant shifts in the Society of Jesus, in the church, and in society at large: first, the Second Vatican Council; and second, the *révolution tranquille*, which posed a major challenge for the Province of French Canada. Consequently, both provinces would experience a decline in Jesuit membership during that decade and the decades to follow.

A. The Second Vatican Council

The Second Vatican Council (Vatican II) stands as the key event of the 1960s and profoundly marked the church. In its wake, as well-known, a dramatic reversal from growth to decline took place in many religious communities. Did a direct causal link exist between, on the one hand, the council and its decrees and, on the other, the general drop in membership in the church and religious communities—including the Society of Jesus, the membership of which decreased over sixty percent from some 36,000 to 14,000 members today? Those uncomfortable with the council and its aftermath have often blamed Vatican II for fanning rather than extinguishing the flames of secularization. However, to address this question would take us beyond our historical narrative into theological speculation.⁴¹

Nevertheless, we can conclude here that one aspect of this decline that affected religious congregations involved the shift away from integral involvement toward individualism—a tendency to stand on the shore rather than to jump in, such that to pick-and-choose, cafeteria-style, beliefs and codes of action has become more frequent. In this

⁴¹ Vatican II intended to respond to the increasingly obvious quantitative and qualitative decline in the faith. Hoping to re-energize the church and its perennial mission, the council went back to the sources of the faith to update doctrinal formulation and disencumber pastoral practice. In this way, it offered greater freedom to the faithful, encouraging them to a deeper re-engagement with the faith. But, as we know from the history of ecumenical councils, the impact of councils often takes decades—even centuries—to manifest itself. From this perspective, we can see the recent Synod on Synodality as an unfolding of Vatican II.

spirit, many who no longer practice their Catholicism now describe themselves as “spiritual rather than religious,” while others have turned their backs on both spirituality and religion altogether. Still, others remain as the buried embers in which the church hopes the Lord’s breath to fan new life.

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In the midst of all this, we can identify a real value in belonging to the church as unique individuals rather than as identical cogs in an institutional machine—cogs that exist simply to pray, obey, and pay. But, as Pope Francis insists, in harmony with Vatican II, we also have the responsibility to participate as unique persons-in-relation-with-each-other, walking together as committed members of a synodal community where we give and find support. Without this commitment, a sense of isolation, insecurity, and hopelessness will grow—as it has in recent decades among the younger generation, complicating the tasks of vocation and formation directors. Finally, Canada now welcomes far fewer candidates into the Society, and many of them have not received a solid anterior formation in spiritual and religious values. Still, the Society in Canada has begun to experience Vatican II as a positive resource, helping it re-emphasize the communal dimension and move beyond the narrow concern for such internal differences as language and nationality.

B. The *Révolution Tranquille*

The *révolution tranquille*, which began in the 1960s in the province of Quebec, did not involve violence and disruption. Quickly and relatively amicably, major changes, involving both church and state, took place in the organization of Quebec society, and these changes have continued, albeit at a slower pace, toward the integral *laïcité* that prevails in Quebec today. Specifically, the unique control that the church exercised over Quebec institutions, which elsewhere fell under civil supervision, gradually, but rapidly, came apart. As a result, such church institutions as schools, hospitals, and orphanages came under government control and supervision. At the same time, the connection of most French Canadians in Quebec with the church

has gradually diminished.⁴² On this note, while some still consider themselves believers, the vast majority of French-Canadian Catholics do not practice their religion or have abandoned it altogether.

Of course, the movement away from religious belief and practice toward secularization had begun to move throughout Western Europe and North America well before the 1960s. But what happened in Quebec was unique. Many lay Catholics had increasingly chafed under the omni-present control of the church, feeling that they had no say in many institutions that they could and should be directing. Other lay Catholics were simply becoming nominal or former Catholics. This pent-up pressure increased until a quick and almost explosive release in the 1960s, which led to church authorities—some bewildered, others convinced it was time to let go—negotiating with the Quebec government their withdrawal from many key institutions. From that moment on, the movement toward secularization that the church had kept at bay started to overwhelm society in general. At that point, Quebec caught up with the rest of the West in this same trajectory and soon went beyond it.

A similar movement had also begun to take place, more silently and slowly, in English Canada, and even more slowly in the United States. And this differing pace of secularization contributed to the difference between the two Canadian Jesuit provinces.

In addition, many in Quebec now thought that, if we were able to take over institutions heretofore run by the church, could we not better reclaim our identity and protect our fragile language by also by securing our independence from the Canadian Federation?⁴³ French Canadians already had a strong nationalistic streak;

⁴² For more on this phenomenon, see Sandrine Vieira, “Les Québécois sont les moins pratiquants au Canada,” *Le Devoir*, November 2, 2021, www.ledevoir.com/societe/644538/religion-les-quebecois-sont-les-moins-pratiquants-au-canada?

⁴³ Those who favored separation used the politically softer term *souveraineté-association*, which incorporated but went beyond the earlier *nationalism* while letting go of the latter’s religious dimension. As such, they desired to form a Quebec nation independent but still in relation to the rest of Canada. Note that, because of the potential for disorder and conflict that separation would bring, the higher clergy did not publicly advocate separation, hoping to keep the people in a state of peace and acquiescence with the church. Nonetheless, many church people adopted this option.

but a political movement, *le Parti Québécois*, that emerged in 1968 strove explicitly toward this end, which it almost achieved in the 1995 referendum on the issue.

Understandably, members of both Jesuit provinces had their own opinions on the separation, the spectrum running from strong federalists to reluctant federalists and reluctant separatists to strong separatists. And while members of the English Canada province identified primarily as strong federalists, the French Canada province had members in all four categories; the two reluctant categories had significant numbers with many more strong separatists than strong federalists.⁴⁴ However, most Jesuits expressed their opinions on these matters privately and in a civil way, hereby avoiding unwelcome publicity and conflicts that would harm the union of Jesuit minds and hearts. Indeed, as we know, the Society always forbade its members to take public positions on political issues.⁴⁵ Still, this hardening of political stances had a real impact on the two provinces as the distance between them seemed to grow. And so, while Jesuit kinship and a basic good will remained, indifference and the beginnings of antagonism arose, especially given the possibility of Quebec claiming independence.

To work against these dynamics, conversation among members of the two provinces required tact and the avoiding of stereotyped portrayals of the other side. To this end, superiors continued to deal gracefully with practical issues touching the two provinces and soon began quietly exploring the possibilities for collaboration. Yet the rank-and-file members of both provinces mostly had, for a time, no awareness of these background conversations, which

⁴⁴ No one has yet made a statistical survey on this question, although the issue has interested me since the mid-1960s. This judgment then represents my own opinion, based on many conversations over the years in which many expressed their own views and their sense of where their province members stood on the matter. Note, however, that urgent concern for this issue has declined in the years following the 1995 referendum.

⁴⁵ Fr. Jacques Couture (1929–1995), who ran for mayor in Montreal and later served as a minister in the newly elected Parti Québécois government of Quebec, stands as a notable breach of this rule. Although he had to leave the Society on account of it, he reentered after his engagement in politics and did extraordinary apostolic work with the poor in Madagascar.

might have further upset those who fervently favored separation of Quebec from Canada and those who felt aghast at this prospect.

Nevertheless, almost all gradually entered this dialogue.

Many Francophone Jesuits thus saw social justice, the independence of Quebec, and the protection of French language as intimately related causes.

At the same time, this challenge to the church in Quebec occasioned keen differences of opinion within the Catholic population and its pastoral leaders. Traditional-

ly, most Quebec higher clergy trended conservative, not wanting to make waves. As such, their take on the social doctrine of the church focused more on leaving undisturbed the traditional arrangements and patterns of proper submission to both church and state. But increasing numbers of clerics and lay people, having studied the social teachings of Leo XIII and Pius XI, moved their focus from social order to social justice.⁴⁶ In this spirit, younger French-Canadian Jesuits involved themselves heavily in these newer battles, and their Anglophone confreres soon caught up to them. In the end, both provinces focused on social justice as an apostolic aim, and this encouraged conversations between the two provinces and the willingness to move beyond linguistic boundaries. And to complicate matters further, many younger, socially-minded Francophone Jesuits were on the side of *souveraineté-association*, which they felt more favorable to their social ministries and language.

All these events went into the rich stew of linguistic, political, cultural, social, and ecclesial concerns involved in the defense of the French language since 1842. To summarize:

⁴⁶ Fr. Jean D'Auteuil Richard (1906–2002) and a few confreres, sent to Europe for studies in sociology, returned with a new take on the social teaching of Pope Leo XIII. After a struggle, he served as the first editor of the new periodical, *Relations*, and in 1948 had an article published on silicosis in a Quebec mine. The owners of the mine demanded a retraction and the provincial yielded and in effect sent D'Auteuil Richard into exile, although he returned as provincial some ten years later. A similar situation later arose at Thetford Mines for which, despite the significant movement in priority in the church from social order to social justice, the miners received a meager settlement.

- The earlier issues had more to do with ecclesiology, since earlier Francophone Jesuits who settled in Montreal considered the defense of the French language against assimilation integral to the defense of the faith. This view continued until the division of the province in 1924.
- Prior to the *revolution tranquille*, some French-Canadian Jesuits defended the French language because it fostered the survival and thriving of the French culture brought to New France—a rich culture in which the French language, with its demands for clear and elegant expression, played a central role. On this note, Fr. Jean-Papin Archambault (1880–1966), an influential member of the Francophone province, worked closely in his earlier years with a larger group, the *Action Française*.⁴⁷ Related to this, Chanoine Lionel Groulx (1878–1967), the outstanding intellectual and academic member of the *Action*, expounded their broader concern to protect and foster French language and culture. By contrast, Archambault, eminently practical in his approach, often contributed effectively by visiting French Canadian enterprises that, to the detriment of their own language, advertised their products with English terms and slogans—an even greater concern today.
- From the 1960s, a strong political dimension emerged in the fight for the French language. Advocates of separation or of increased political powers for Quebec, saw in them a way of ensuring more securely the survival of French language and culture in a Quebec totally able to set its own policies. Many Francophone Jesuits thus saw social justice, the independence of Quebec, and the protection of French language as intimately related causes.

C. Decline

The statistical data from these years clearly present a pattern of growth and decline. From the separation of the provinces in 1924, to the mid-

⁴⁷ Papin Archambault pioneered establishment of the traditional Jesuit ministry of closed retreats. Later, he committed himself primarily to fostering Catholic social doctrine, focusing his efforts on social order and fighting the establishment of *Relations*, fearing the shift, mentioned in the note directly above, from social order to social justice as an apostolic priority in the French Canada province.

1960s, French Canada doubled its numbers rapidly to eight hundred fifty-three and English Canada tripled its members to four hundred seventy-five. But in the following years, novitiate cohorts could not compensate for departures and deaths, and a steep decline began in both provinces. By 2018, French Canada had shrunk to fourteen percent of its maximum size and English Canada to twenty-seven percent. Meanwhile, in the 1960s, French Canada took on Haiti as a mission, and in 2018, the final year of its separate existence, forty-nine of the French Canada province's one hundred ten members were Haitian, with membership originating in French Canada less than ten percent of membership at its height. Note too that this decline has continued beyond in the reunited Canada province, from a total of two hundred twenty-eight members in 2018 to a total of two hundred two members in 2023.

Up to the early 1960s, both provinces, especially the French Canada province, had large entrance classes, many of whose men entered with outstanding academic and leadership skills but often less commitment to the Society and its mission, and so left and went on to fruitful careers in civil society. And like many other religious communities, a notable decrease in new entries and an increase in annual deaths combined with the departures to contribute to the net loss in membership.⁴⁸

From this sharp decline arise the questions of why this decline, and why a decline more precipitous in the French Canada province? To answer this question, note first that the decline went beyond Canada, as world-wide Jesuit membership dropped by some forty percent and did so despite the strong expansion of Jesuit provinces in Africa, South Asia, and East Asia. Indeed, the American provinces declined roughly at the same rate as did that of English Canada.

To complicate matters, the fewer men entering during this period have generally seemed less committed to community. Instead of seeing the Society as a tightly-knit apostolic body, they saw it more as a space

⁴⁸ In the ten years prior to Vatican II, the province catalogues reveal 297 entries for French Canada and 181 for English Canada and, in the ten years after the council, 52 entries for French Canada and 87 for English Canada. Corresponding departure numbers were, for French Canada, 156 before and 203 after; and, for English Canada, 78 before and 163 after.

where they could become fully themselves in a constructive and fulfilling apostolic endeavor. In brief, many of the men entering saw membership in the Society, at least initially in their Jesuit lives, more as a career opportunity than a vocation. With such a mindset, we can understand how a young man might investigate the Society and say “not for me,” or at a later stage in his Jesuit life come to that realization and depart, which has happened in both provinces.

In brief, many of the men entering saw membership in the Society, at least initially in their Jesuit lives, more as a career opportunity than a vocation.

But Jesuit formation, with some initial years of confusion in the immediate wake of Vatican II, has found good pathways to achieve its perennial purposes. Indeed, while we now have far fewer young Jesuits, more of them come across as solid in their vocations, enthused by the apostolic preferences of the Society, thinking of themselves first as Jesuits and second as specialists in a given field.

In further consequence, the leaders of the two provinces, rejoicing in the presence of skilled and talented men in their ranks, many of them potential leaders, to some extent did not see the rapid decline just beginning and thus pursued unrealistic apostolic goals. For example, the French Canada province, prematurely divided in 1964 into the Montreal province and the Quebec province, quickly reunited in 1969, while at the same time both provinces constructed new and commodious buildings that soon would remain empty. On this point, the dreams of Loyola College and the Collège Sainte-Marie of developing into full universities never materialized—and fortunately so, since the lack of Jesuit monetary and personnel resources soon would have led to loss of Jesuit control.⁴⁹

The next question has to do with why this decline happened more precipitously and decisively in the French Canada province. Certainly, the *revolution tranquille* seems to have amplified the effects of Vatican II. Going back in history, however, unlike English and Hispanic colonies

⁴⁹ In both cases, the government said *no* to their request to evolve into universities but invited them to enter mergers with other institutions, which led to the foundation of two new public institutions: Université du Québec à Montréal (1969) and Concordia University (1974).

to the south of Canada, which from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries received a large influx of immigrants and ample resources to defend themselves and eventually move to independence, France largely saw New France as a commercial outpost. From this perspective, while church authorities wanted New France to grow like the much more populous English colonies to the south, France sent an insufficient number of immigrants to the colony. And so, religious leaders did what they could to create a vibrant life, founding schools to look after the French and Native populations in alliance with the new colony and providing hospital care and social services. Significantly, the seventeenth century Jesuit *Relations* not only publicized in France Jesuit work in Canada but also sought to attract immigrants to New France where they might build a new life.⁵⁰

This church involvement intensified and deepened when the French abandoned the colony to the English in 1763.⁵¹ At that time, many who had played a key role in the colony returned to France leaving religious sisters and clerics to sustain the community. The latter group allied their spiritual leadership with elements of political leadership, seeking to maintain peace in a fragile situation, under English authorities, and promoting large families to bring about *la revanche des berceaux*, or “revenge of the cradles.” In other words, the survival of the remaining French inhabitants of New France moved to the forefront; that, and the church, which already had played a pioneering role in the organization of civil society in New France, solidified and extended that role in areas that normally would devolve to lay leadership, such that joining a religious community, or the clergy, seemed, at the time the best way to make an impact on society. And so, the institutional church developed immensely, as schools and parish priests exerted a powerful influence in the lives of their communities. As a result, good education for non-clerics, especially in the classical humanities, gradually became available, eventually resulting in a lay leadership that

⁵⁰ See Bronwen McShea, *Apostles of Empire: the Jesuits and New France*, (Omaha: University of Nebraska Press, 2019), esp. part. 1.

⁵¹ In 1763, the inhabitants of New France numbered 60,000 plus, after some returns to France. By comparison, the population of the thirteen colonies of England to the south of New France numbered over two million.

wanted its say in civil society even as some emerging anticlerical circles sought to abolish ecclesiastical tutelage.

As for church leadership, until Vatican II, Quebec bishops usually maintained a conservative, somewhat ultramontane position, seeing themselves as protectors of a people whom they considered immature and thus unready to act on their own. As such, they constantly warned their flock about occasions of sin, especially sexual sins, but also unnecessary association with Anglophones, which could lead to mixed marriages, assimilation into the Anglophone community, and eventually apostasy—always seeking to maintain a safe space for them to practice their faith.

Eventually there emerged a range of opinions among the bishops, and the educated Catholic laity, from stringent ultramontane to liberal. As we have seen, resistance on the part of the laity eventually flared up, and this led to the *révolution tranquille* of the 1960s. Quebec could no longer be perceived as priest-ridden, and vocations to religious communities, previously indispensable in fulfilling vital roles in Quebec society, dwindled more rapidly than elsewhere in Canada. Caught up in this current, many religious communities felt swamped and struggled to find an effective path to assure their own continuation and apostolic effectiveness. This certainly happened with the French Canada province, which could not maintain the strong role it played especially in the educational apostolate.

At the same time, demographic changes, most of them mirroring demographic changes in the Canadian population at large, accompanied the decline in both provinces. For many years now, the Francophone inhabitants of Quebec have not been able to maintain their population through births. To compensate, the government has sought immigration of French speakers such as Haitians. Fortunately, the French Canada province had sent men on mission to Haiti in the 1960s, and from that point onward it received candidates from that country, which by 2018, comprised about half of its membership.

An analogous situation pertained in the English Canada province. When it began in 1924, its members, given their mostly Irish surnames, received the nickname *les irlandais*. But more and more members came from

families who had emigrated from many parts of the world. On this note, by 2018, the roughly twenty percent Allophone (i.e., neither Francophone nor Anglophone) composition of the English Canada province corresponded to the almost fifty percent Haitian component of the French Canada province. Small wonder then that, with notable declines in both provinces, and with their shared history, the question arose in both provinces as to whether it would help to seek a way to continue their Jesuit journey together.

VII. Toward Reunion

We have concentrated on the period that followed Vatican II, the decrees of which thus far have had no impact on the prevailing pattern of overall religious disaffiliation. However, they have energized and educated many faithful to engage in various forms of renewal and have given impetus to religious communities to rediscover the roots of their common and apostolic life.

On this note, the conciliar renewal, which promoted return to authentic sources in Scripture and Tradition, urged religious communities to reconnect with their own charisms and ways of proceeding of their founders and early associates. In this spirit, the council asked communities: What in your origins could give you life today? Have other later and inauthentic traditions papered over authentic ones? While religious communities did tackle these broad questions, Vatican II added a juridical demand, asking them to review and renew their constitutions in this light—a task that the Society completed in General Congregation 31 (1965–1966).

This juridical review led the Society of Jesus to a rediscovery of how Ignatius and his companions shaped their new community and chose its many ministries, and this opened perspectives of renewal for today. The key question here involved not only *what* the first Jesuits, a disparate group from many nations, discerned about their life of shared mission and community, but also *how* they discerned it. New learnings about this “how” have led to profound advances, still unfolding, about what path to take for individual and communal apostolic discernment, which entails Spirit-guided conversation more than debate and discussion.

These foundational discernments of Ignatius and his first companions supplied the primary model for this initiative, supplemented by new understandings of Jesuit spirituality and its roots as well as helpful techniques from the secular world on group decision making. Different parts of the Society, including Canada, the US, and Western Europe, have used this new form of discernment, which has contributed to the methodology of the recent Synod on Synodality. Although this began slowly in the 1980s, and with mixed results in Jesuit provinces, constant practice and training meant that Jesuits and their collaborators have gained proficiency in this model, not only practicing it, but also teaching it to others. This, in turn, has led to significant apostolic renewal in Jesuit and many other communities and apostolates. In all of this, Canadian Jesuits have performed a significant role.

The key question here involved not only what the first Jesuits, a disparate group from many nations, discerned about their life of shared mission and community, but also how they discerned it.

Other factors also favored the resumption of significant conversations between the two provinces and thus paved the way for their eventual collaboration toward a new integrated Canadian province. They include the following:

- **A recognition of limitation and need.** The precipitous drop in membership in both provinces and the abandonment of many once-thriving apostolates made each province more aware of its own poverty and need for support. Humility indeed has a way of untying the self-created knots of false security and illusory independence. The question then arose as to how each province might support the other. This led to deeper apostolic conversations, at first more tentative and careful, and then more spontaneous and open-ended.
- **Mutual acquaintance and appreciation.** In general, experts in communication recognize that good meetings include time at the outset for participants, especially coming from different cultural groups, to get to know one another's backgrounds, culture, characteristics, and values. This practice can help the partici-

pants to overcome prejudices, framing differences no longer as threats but as qualities to accept and even treasure. This, in turn, creates open spaces and freedom to imagine something new. Those who led the inter-province discussions and discernments attended closely to this dimension as did the organizers of the 2023–2024 Synod on Synodality.

- **Overcoming the language barrier.** Generally, and in the case of this communal discernment involving two language groups, investing in expert simultaneous translation can help those who struggle with languages not their own. And with further advances in technology, we now can achieve mutual understanding more easily even without translators.
- **The faith-justice mission of the Society.** In the Jesuit post-Vatican II renewal, under Father General Pedro Arrupe (1907–1991), a significant advance came in offering a clear summary of the sum and scope of the Society as defined in 1540—namely, the service of faith and the promotion of justice that the former entails. This succinct formula, which at first seemed perplexing and controversial to many Jesuits, soon received enthusiastic embrace by the leadership and most members of the English and French Canada provinces. As a result, it has served as a guideline for further discernment about the Canadian Jesuit mission and has minimized differences in context and culture.

In this context, major superiors of the two provinces had been dealing successfully with practical issues between the two provinces. But eventually such meetings broadened in their scope, at first by sharing apostolic perspectives, eventually moving to full-scale collaboration, and even potential reunification. They eventually involved the whole membership of the two provinces together with the non-Jesuits who now partner with them.

First, in 1967, a promising grain of a mustard seed appeared as part of the centennial of Confederation, which brought together members of the two provinces in a canoe trip from the Shrine of the Canadian Martyrs in Midland, Ontario, to Montreal, following the route of the early Jesuits missionaries to what they called *Huron*. This provided an opportunity for these Jesuits to get to know each

other, in a personal way, through the sharing of a sports event. It also highlighted the devotion to the martyrs as a basis to unify all Canadian Jesuits. Note too that a similar event, fifty years later, just before the province reunification, invited First Nations people and lay collaborators from both provinces to participate. As before, they traveled not in separate canoes but mingled together.

And the collaborative initiatives continued. Between 1978 and 1980, a small group of Jesuits of the two provinces, including two notable Provincials, Frs. Julien Harvey (1923–1998) and William (Bill) Ryan (1925–2017), met a few times. These men shared a commitment to social justice as formulated, in 1975, by General Superior Pedro Arrupe and GC 32. Following those meetings, both provinces founded centers for faith and justice: the French Canada center published *Relations*, a review with social justice as a focus; and, in 1983, the English Canada province began a similar review, *Compass*, which ceased publication in 1997. Contacts between the two centers helped articulate cultural and political differences of context germane to the inter-province discussions soon to begin.

Next, in 2001, a meeting took place in Montreal between the administrations of both provinces, aiming primarily to enable a common understanding of the apostolic outreach of both provinces and the financial resources available to each.

In addition to these smaller-scale events, 1992 marked the one hundred fiftieth anniversary of the return of the Jesuits to Canada after the suppression. For the memorial, the two provincials, Frs. Eric Maclean (1943–2007) and Jean-Marie Archambault (1930–2016), decided to organize such a celebration, the first since the division of the two provinces. Most active members of both provinces attended, celebrating their common origin and initiating, or at times deepening, their acquaintance.

As the year progressed, two main events occurred. The first, in May, celebrated the 1842 return of the Jesuits after the suppression, while the second, on July 31, honored the jubilarians of both provinces, preceded by a tour of the various Jesuit sites of Montreal with historians Frs. Gilles Chaussé (1931–2012) and Jacques Monet. This generated a wonderful spirit of rediscovery and camaraderie, as

expressed in the following comment of Fr. Rémi Potvin (1922–2004), the assistant to the provincial of French Canada:

During these two festive days, for the first time in our history, an impressive number of Jesuits of our two provinces mingled with one another—indeed a large majority of Jesuits who could come did come. This did constitute a meaningful event in the current political context of Canada. It does signify—in two days it would be difficult to achieve more—that in spite of our linguistic and cultural divergences, and no matter what our future has in store for us, it is possible to establish among us Jesuits, while respecting our singularities, open dialogue and effective collaboration toward an evangelization that challenges this part of the world where Providence, through the ups and downs of our history, brought us together. Even had they been nothing but a prophetic sign, these days deserve a choice place in our history.⁵²

On the same order of importance, an English Canada province congress took place in Midland, Ontario, in 2011, at the site of the Martyrs' Shrine with the presence of many French-Canadian Jesuits who had not received invitations to the previous congress in 1991. This event entailed a process of spiritual conversation in groups, which those present greatly appreciated. A similar event took place in Midland in 2019 under the aegis of the new province, with all sectors fully represented. The site, especially sacred to all Canadian Jesuits, and the significant participation in both congresses, enhanced and deepened the emerging togetherness of Jesuits and their collaborators, of Francophone and Anglophone Jesuits, and of Canadian and Haitian Jesuits, these latter relatively unknown to English-Canadian Jesuits. In a similar vein, both provinces, in 2011, at Port Royal, Nova Scotia celebrated the first arrival, in 1611, of Jesuits to Canada; the next major anniversary will celebrate the return of the Jesuits to Quebec in 1625. An important delegation came to the event in 2011 from French Canada, such that this gathering played a key role in further strengthening the emerging inter-province solidarity.

⁵² *Nouvelles du mois*, Province du Canada français, August 1992, p. 27, my translation.

From this point on, meetings between the two provincials led to decisions. As provincial of English Canada at the time, I had the leisure for very helpful conversations with French Canadian Jesuit Fr. Daniel LeBlond (CAN), which we would continue when the general named him provincial in 2004. As a result, the two provinces agreed to work toward a joint novitiate and joint archives and to organize regular joint meetings of the consultations of both provinces to start exploring what further inter-province collaboration could entail. But the sensitive issue of the reunification of the two provinces, and especially the timing of the reunification, required a careful and longer conversation, that would not take place until later. Though already prepared to move toward unification, some members felt apprehensive. Did they stand to lose some essential features or values from their own province?⁵³

Action rapidly followed these joint consultations, such that by 2008 the two provinces had established a common bilingual novitiate in Montreal. In so doing, leadership intended to support formation by immersion in the other language of new entrants who needed it. As a result, thoroughly bilingual young Jesuits emerged from this novitiate, but numbers dwindled as the years progressed. Also, in 2009 the English Canada province archives moved from Toronto to a new common facility in the basement of the French Canada province offices in Montreal. There, the archives serve not only as a storehouse but also as a center for scholars who want to do research on Jesuit life in Canada since 1611. Likewise, from 2014 onward, the provinces published their annual catalogs in the same binding until, as a single province, it integrated into the catalog of the Jesuit Conference of Canada and the United States (JCCU).

Of course, challenges came with this progress. For example, in the years 2014 and 2015, legislators passed a law in Quebec that prescribed for all secondary schools a religiously neutral course on the

⁵³ Some in the smaller French Canada province feared that this would lead to yet further assimilation, while some in English Canada feared that the secularism of Quebec would taint the new novices of the province, still vulnerable in their religious commitment. These English-Canadians failed to take into consideration the perennial mission of the Society to face such challenges directly.

common values of Quebec citizenship and respect for various religious traditions. Loyola High School wanted an exception to present a Roman Catholic take on these topics and pursued this issue all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada, winning their case. On this point, note that French Canadian Jesuits often felt more sympathy than English-Canadian Jesuits for the objectives of the Quebec government. Furthermore, different legal cultures played a role in this controversy. Specifically, while the English common law tradition opts for minimal laws and more rigid enforcement, which implies fighting strongly against the prescription of a religiously neutral course, French Canada stands within the Roman legal ethos wherein laws present ideals rather than limits, allowing room for exceptions, mitigations, work-arounds, and interpretations, either approved or tolerated. That this difference did not break the cooperation between the two provinces confirmed the common desire to engage in inter-provincial conversations, which soon turned to the question of consolidation.

At the same time, the issue of conference and assistancy membership complicated this discussion.⁵⁴ Traditionally, the two provinces, situated within the British Empire, came under the English assistancy and an assistant to the general who provided administrative support in Rome for several mostly Anglophone provinces. In recent decades, as the general curia created conferences, and reshuffled assistancies, Canada joined the West European Assistancy, which included Britain, France, Belgium, and Ireland. As such, French and English functioned as the common assistancy languages and this suited the Canadian provinces, both of which felt at home in Europe, even considering differences in pastoral context.

As a further sign of collaboration, the English Canada provincial, and more sporadically the French Canada provincial, for some time

⁵⁴ Assistancies are bureaucratic constructs that organize the Society's provinces to facilitate the general's communications with the local realities of the Society's governance. Conferences, on the other hand, a newer structure currently numbering six, comprise the provinces of a larger region of the world and have coordination and governance roles that involve the ways provincials organize themselves for regional cooperation. Note that, to handle the volume of correspondence, the Jesuit conferences of Latin America and Europe each comprise more than one assistancy.

attended the meetings of the provincials of the American assistancy, with Canadian Jesuits belonging to most of the assistancy committees. The US provincials then began, in 2004, an assistancy strategic discernment process, and general superior Adolfo Nicolas (1936–2020), in 2008, approved their commitments, including enhanced collaboration and a consolidation of their ten provinces into four. The Canadian and US provinces now began to function as a conference, although the Canadian provinces did not formally join this conference for some time and thus stood out as the only Jesuit provinces in the world not belonging to a conference—an anomaly that the Roman authorities sought to correct. Pastorally, English Canada had more in common with the US provinces and so for years had shared Jesuit staff with them. But Canadians can feel leery about the self-proclaimed “city on the hill” to the south, for which reason many in the English Canada province wanted to remain united with its sister province, recognizing that the language issue could make a merger with the US difficult. But not belonging to a conference meant that the Canadian provinces could not participate fully in the election of members to the general congregations. Finally, in 2015, the two Canadian provinces, at the behest of the general superior, joined a new Canada-US conference with some adjustment for the bilingualism of Canada.⁵⁵

One of the key instruments for achieving the move toward one Canadian province appeared in a decree on governance, which the 35th General Congregation issued in 2008 and which led to the reformulation of the norms by which the curia establishes, divides, or merges provinces. These norms loomed large as a subject of conversation within and between the two provinces, and the general superior asked each province to review its own status in their light and in a further letter, from 2014, he asked the Canadian provinces where they stood in their discernment.

As the negotiations proceeded, the French Canada province organized in 2012, a few years before the forming of one new province, a communal discernment process on the viability of remaining

⁵⁵ The Jesuit Conference of the United States did not see this adjustment as unusual, given that many US Jesuits were Latino or else have learned Spanish to meet the apostolic needs of their country.

as a separate province. But while locally they had the number of men and the resources to run a province, almost half their membership, including a clear majority of men in formation, and younger men engaged in apostolic work, belonged to Haiti, located some 3,000 kilometers away. Furthermore, the manpower trend in Canada did not look promising, for which reason to continue with the status quo seemed untenable. And so, the two provinces agreed on a bi-province discernment on the question of a new bilingual province for Canada, which led to a decision in 2013 to work toward unification. Then, in 2014, French and English provinces joined the reconfigured US conference, and established a joint CANcommittee—CAN being the acronym for the unified province—to make recommendations on the consolidation of funds, legal incorporations, headquarters, and language policies.

While all this took time, leadership eventually resolved all the pertinent issues, and the new province came into being on July 31, 2018. The committee agreed to establish the headquarters of the new province in Montreal, rather than Toronto, thinking that Quebec civil law would protect its main incorporation better than would the common law of Ontario.

VIII. Looking Back and Looking Ahead

The conclusion of this essay will begin with a summary, in tabular form, of the long road described above and then offer some tentative remarks on the future. This history, which covers 1842 to 1918, divides into three cycles, the first two (1842–1879, 1879–1924) ending in a juridical division and the third (1924–2018) in a juridical union. While the process in the first two cycles involved conflict and separation, the third enjoyed peaceful coexistence followed by discernment and a growing momentum toward reunification.

	Prior State	Process	Result
First Cycle: 1846–1879 <i>Division</i>	New York-Canada Mission	Conflict among superiors from France on the role of the French language in Montreal and Canada	Canada separates from New York and becomes its own mission (1879)
Second Cycle: 1879–1924 <i>Division</i>	A united Canada mission, later a province (1907), under one superior	Conflict between English Jesuits and French Jesuits on language and apostolic priorities	The province of Canada divides into two provinces, English speaking and French speaking (1924)
Third Cycle: 1924–2018 <i>Union</i>	Two separate provinces, one for French Canada, one for English Canada	Slow at first, then momentum toward mutual understanding and, finally, reunion	The two separate provinces in Canada become one province of Canada (2018)

What made for separation in the first two cycles and reunion in the third?

- In the first two cycles, the church was growing, and a wide horizon of new mission fields presented itself for sowing and reaping. As such, each sector had room to separate and go its own way—like Lot and Abraham, who sought to avoid bickering among their herdsmen (Gn 13:9). In the third cycle, however, which resulted in union, the overall context felt constrictive. The church seemed to be crumbling before the eyes of Jesuits of both provinces, more radically so in French Canada. Secularism and individualism were—and are—on the uprise, and vocations much scarcer. With these limitations, they realized humbly their underlying affinity and so chose to come

together more closely in mutual support. This opening of conversations in turn led to their union in 2018.

- At the time of the division in 1924, Canada had five hundred fifty-one Jesuits to divide between the two provinces. But in 2018, with a joint total of two hundred twenty-eight, almost equally divided between the two provinces, union made much more sense.
- One can envisage a third, more spiritual, reason for the difference. Perusal of archival documentation—for example, province consultation minutes, visitation memorials, and correspondence between the general and provincial superiors—reveals a keen, even fussy, critical spirit on how Jesuits lived and carried out their work. Official letters typically raised many small details to enhance the purity of Jesuit observance, including limits on smoking, rules on bathing in the summer, times for getting up, color of socks, and so on, often with detailed reminders of what an earlier general superior or congregation had already determined. Along with this critical spirit, initially inculcated in the novitiate, superiors expected each novice to focus on his own struggles toward perfection, with a twice-a-day examination of conscience. No surprise, then, that men so trained would turn this critical microscope on others. And so, while most Jesuits eventually did come to a more integrated approach to community life, critical attitudes often led to conflicts of the type that this essay describes. The fear of self-disclosure and of familiarity inculcated in initial formation then hardened these attitudes and prevented the development of relationships that might relativize them.

In contrast, another dynamic appeared in the Society in later years, especially the 1980s, resulting from the mandate of Vatican II that led communities to return to the charisms of their foundations. For the Society, this meant returning to a renewed practice of discernment and a new style of spiritual conversation that began with a listening attitude, seeking the positive in other views and treasuring the common commitments underlying conflicting perspectives.⁵⁶ This in turn helped to

⁵⁶ This is what the *praesupponendum* of the *Spiritual Exercises* (no. 22) means: that one must strive to seek out the positive in the position of the other rather than immediately launch into a critique. This attitude, essential for the dialogue between the giver and the receiver of the Exercises, applies likewise to all Jesuit encounters and discussions.

transform major conflicts into reconcilable differences and facilitated the union of the two Canadian provinces.

Note, too, that extraordinary men played key roles during each stage of the journey from 1846 to 2018. Whether in conflict and division or in convergence and union, these men brought Canadian Jesuits to the present day. These included men especially gifted in both English and French, many because of their mixed family origins, who intervened at the right moments. They also included men faithful to their vow of obedience, even in the face of strong convictions to the contrary, which kept the way open to orderly progress. In general, those called on both sides to governance in the earlier years maintained cooperative contacts on specific issues. Then, in more recent years, these attitudes blossomed into full-blown cooperation that enabled a realization, in the Canadian context, of Ignatius's vision of a multinational apostolic society.

Given this history, we can see that the union of Canadian Jesuits into one new province does not mark the achievement of a final goal but rather a waystation on their journey. Now, they must renew their energy and continue all the more arduously along the path that God has opened before them. Finally, they know that fidelity to their way of proceeding, as formulated in the Jesuit *Constitutions*, has enabled them to arrive at this juncture. Understandably, when contemplating the difficult task before them, they may at times fret about their future. But in the end, God calls them to serve in confidence. Regardless of the challenges that may lie ahead, God will accompany them while guiding them always to his greater purpose.